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## MEMORIAL TO JOHN WESLEY POWELL

By FREDERICK S. DELLENBAUGH

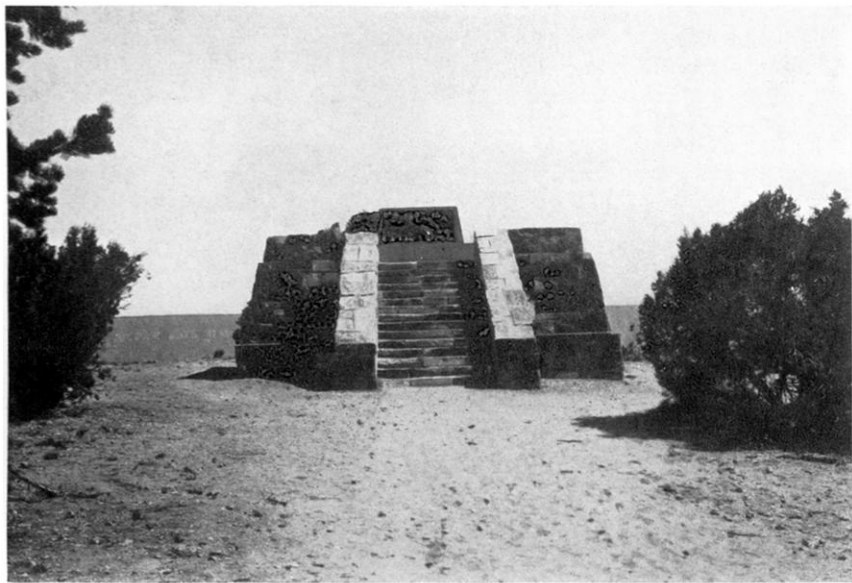
**A**FTER four years in the Civil War, Major John Wesley Powell, minus his right forearm, which remained on the field of Shiloh, turned again to science and while geologizing in 1867 in Middle Park, Colorado, conceived the idea of exploring the thousand miles of profound canyons through which the Green-Colorado river tumbled down some five thousand feet in lonely fury from the peaks of the Wind River mountains of Wyoming towards the sea.

Around the hunter's camps of the Far West for years circulated wild stories of gloomy subterranean passages where the Colorado disappeared from the light of day, and tore on its tumultuous course, and no man lived who could of his own knowledge, controvert them, nor yet the companion tales of mighty falls from whose grasp there was no escape.

Major Powell formed his own opinion of these yarns and he resolved to act on his belief. From Green River station, Wyoming, therefore, on May 24, 1869, he started down the river with four small boats manned by resolute frontiersmen. After three months of desperate battling with the torrent the remnant of the party arrived with two boats at the appointed destination, the mouth of the Virgin river, August 30, 1869.

At a particularly ugly rapid below the mouth of Diamond creek, three of the men refused to proceed, despite the Major's efforts to persuade them that the end of the canyon must be near, and that they ran more chances of disaster in leaving. They climbed out on the north heading for the Mormon settlement of St. George, about 90 miles off. They were ambushed, and killed, near Mt. Dellenbaugh by the Shewits Indians.

Of the meager accumulation of scientific data gathered under the exceptionally difficult circumstances, most was lost, so that,



POWELL MONUMENT  
THE TABLET

Photographed by Kolb Bros.

while Major Powell had demonstrated the correctness of his opinion that the canyons, one and all, could be navigated with small boats downward, he found himself without the scientific material which was the main object of his adventure.

Consequently, in a spirit entirely characteristic, he projected a second expedition which should be better provided, forewarned, and forearmed, and more able to carry on the proper exploration with some deliberation.

The second expedition started from Green River station, Wyoming, May 22, 1871, provision during the interval having been made for side expeditions to bring in food supplies at stated places. For two years this party made extensive observations and researches, not only along the bottom of the canyons of the main river, but up side canyons, tributary rivers, and on the heights as well for considerable distances back on each side as happened to be possible. On the north side and the west these operations reached to the High Plateaus of Utah, to the Grand Wash, the Virgin and Pine Valley mountains; and on the south to the towns of the Moquis or Hopi Indians.

This "*Exploration of the Colorado River of the West and its Tributaries*," eventually extended much further and developed into the "*Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, J. W. Powell, in Charge*," merging finally in 1880, with other government surveys, to form the present Geological Survey, a monument to the common sense of Congress, and of which Major Powell for many years was director. Out of the Powell surveys also grew the Bureau of Ethnology, which he founded and directed to the year of his death.

In 1902 Major Powell died at the age of 68. On the second anniversary of his death, at a meeting of the International Geological Congress at the Grand Canyon, it was suggested that a monument to his memory should be erected somewhere along the Canyon rim overlooking the Granite Gorge, the scene of his greatest triumph over the river. The matter was brought before Congress and at the 60th meeting of that body an appropriation was made in the sundry civil act, March 5, 1909, of \$5,000

for the purpose of procuring and erecting on the brink of the Grand Canyon in the Grand Canyon Forest reserve in Arizona, a memorial to the late John Wesley Powell, with a suitable pedestal, if necessary, in recognition of his distinguished public services as a soldier, explorer, and administrator of government scientific work.

The design was to be subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary at that time was the Hon. Walter L. Fisher who immediately appointed, as his advisory committee, three long-time intimate friends of Major Powell: W. H. Holmes of the National Museum, C. D. Walcott of the Smithsonian, and H. C. Rizer of the Geological Survey. This committee entered wholeheartedly into the effort to secure the best design and the best results for the amount appropriated, and consultations in many directions were instituted. The smallness of the appropriation for so large a task was a handicap. Not only were preliminary expenses in the way of tentative designs and models to be considered but there were the very serious questions of transportation of men and materials to the Canyon. The site chosen was Sentinel Point about one mile west of Hotel El Tovar. Even the water for mixing the concrete would require to be hauled (as all water for all purposes is hauled for the hotel and other buildings at Grand Canyon station) from a point about seventy-five miles back from the rim. Although the great river is so near it must be remembered that it flows at the bottom of a gorge five thousand feet deep.

Another difficulty in working out a design was to provide against the vandalism of tourists and cowboys. There would be few of the latter at the Canyon but many of the former, and the practical obliteration by vandals of the Custer monument on the Little Big Horn was a clear warning.

The Art Commission, too, must pass on the design. At last, a design of a huge seat with a bronze record tablet set into its back, reared on a stepped platform, from which the chasm could be viewed, was prepared and all requirements fulfilled, only to find that its cost was beyond the funds available. Congress refused to add anything and although the Santa Fé railway offered to transport materials to El Tovar free of cost and the Southwestern Portland Cement Company of El Paso unhesitatingly contributed an entire



car-load of cement, the design had to be revised and scaled down. The seat feature was omitted entirely and a truncated pyramid, of rough-dressed native stone, with a platform reached by a broad flight of steps from the side opposite the outer rim of the promontory, was adopted by the Secretary of the Interior from designs made in his office.

The modified monument was completed on Sentinel Point, December, 1916. The bronze tablet (pl. v) designed by J. R. Marshall, with an insert of a low relief portrait of Major Powell by Miss Leila Usher, was set in the face of a low altar-like wall rising from the outer edge of the pyramid in such a way that the visitor sees it as he mounts the steps and looks out into the wide chasm.

On each side of the portrait of the leader are the names of the men of his two parties who stood by him to the end of his canyon adventure, and below is the statement:

ERECTED BY THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO  
MAJOR JOHN WESLEY POWELL FIRST EXPLORER OF THE  
GRAND CANYON WHO DESCENDED THE RIVER WITH HIS  
PARTY IN ROW BOATS TRAVERSING THE GORGE BENEATH  
THIS POINT AUGUST 17TH 1869 AND AGAIN SEPTEMBER 1ST 1872

The dedication of the monument (pl. vi) rested with the Secretary of the Interior who made up his mind to hold the ceremony while on a trip west in the spring of 1918. On May 20, accordingly, 49 years after the event the final touch was given, to the monument marking the conclusion of a great epoch in the history of the United States, the epoch of western exploration and exploratory development which closed with the romantic achievement of Major Powell.

The hasty telegraphic invitations to the survivors of the expeditions, Messrs. Jones, Hillers, Hattan, and Dellenbaugh did not allow them time to reach the scene from their distant homes, so neither they, nor Mrs. Powell, nor her daughter, nor any of the original committee on the monument, were present.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately

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<sup>1</sup> Another member of the second expedition is still living also, "hale and hearty," Captain F. M. Bishop, but as Capt. Bishop severed his connection with the party at the end of 1871 and did not go into the Grand Canyon his name does not appear on the tablet.

a surviving sister of Major Powell's, Mrs. Juliet Powell Rice, came on from California, and also Mrs. L. W. Field, who was living with her husband at Green River station when Major Powell started, and who served the party their last civilized breakfast before they turned their prowls down the stream.

The ceremonies were arranged by Manager Brant of El Tovar and began at two in the afternoon of May 20, 1918, by an invocation by Bishop Atwood of Phoenix. This was followed by the placing of a wreath of wild flowers on the monument by a company of young girls dressed in white. A libation of water from the Colorado was next poured by Mrs. Field. Then Governor George W. P. Hunt, of Arizona, made an address, William Farnum the eminent actor recited, and finally Secretary Lane concluded the exercises by these remarks:

Major Powell throughout his life was the incarnation of the inquisitive and courageous spirit of the American. He wanted to know and he was willing to risk his life that he might know. This was the spirit that he showed in making the hazard of his life in exploring the Colorado River canyon. Mystery did not daunt him. It was a challenge to his intrepid spirit. From boyhood he was a soldier, not merely in the brave days of his army life, but in the equally brave days of his civil life. If, as some one has said, life is a great experience and only the adventurous succeed, Powell's life was a success. His name is forever linked with the romance of the conquest of the American continent. This monument will stand for the centuries to his honor, but there should be, and there will be, a greater monument to him, erected to him by the people of the United States. For these waters will be turned upon millions of acres of desert lands to make them fruitful. The soldiers returning from our great war across the ocean will, I trust, be put to work storing and training and leading out these waters upon the great plains below, and the homes that during the centuries to come will dot what now is waste land, will be the real monument to Major Powell.

Considering that Major Powell was one of the first to urge the reclamation of the arid lands of the United States, the Secretary's remarks were truly apropos.

But nothing, no matter how big, can express more eloquently the absolute identity of Major Powell with the spirit of the wonderful river than this simple pyramid, overlooking the most difficult portion of the torrent and the deepest and most magnificent part of the whole series of great canyons.

NEW YORK CITY.